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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/123 of 15 December 2005, requested the Secretary-General to submit at its sixty-first session a comprehensive and updated report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel and on the implementation of that resolution. The present report outlines the threats against the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel over the last year, and provides an update on those requests and recommendations to the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 60/123 that fall under the purview of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

This is the second report prepared under the auspices of the Department established pursuant to resolution 59/276 (XI) of 23 December 2004, in response to the report of the Secretary-General on a strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations (A/59/365). A separate report will be submitted to the sixty-first session of the Assembly on the implementation of resolution 59/276 (XI).

The present report outlines the threats against the safety and security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel over the past year and provides an update on the implementation of the initiatives approved during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. As those initiatives are being implemented over the course of the entire biennium 2005-2006, the report constitutes a progress report on actions that have already been taken and an indication of what remains to be done.

* The present report was submitted late as the requirement for verification and confirmation of the circumstances of staff arrested, detained or who lost their lives during the latter portion of the reporting period was compounded by the rapid onset of the crisis in Lebanon, which imposed urgent demands on the same assets of the Department of Safety and Security.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/123 of 15 December 2005, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the sixty-first session a comprehensive and updated report on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, and on the implementation of that resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 and has been prepared in consultation with the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

3. A detailed up-to-date account of progress made in implementing resolution 59/276 (XI) of 23 December 2004, which established the Department of Safety and Security, is provided in a separate report submitted to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly under the title "Strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations".

II. Threats against United Nations and humanitarian personnel

4. Throughout the reporting period United Nations personnel, deployed globally in a broad range of field operations, continued to be subjected to such threats as hostage taking, physical assault, robbery, theft, harassment and detention. The security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel remains unassured in Afghanistan, Somalia and especially in the Sudan. The Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia and the Israeli authorities continue to detain United Nations staff and to refuse the United Nations right of protection, in violation of agreed conventions.

5. During the reporting period, 15 United Nations civilian staff members lost their lives as a result of malicious acts. That figure does not include uniformed peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty or staff who lost their lives as a result of aircraft accidents. Of these deaths, 11 occurred in Africa, 3 in the Middle East and 1 in Asia and the Pacific; the Sudan accounted for 4 deaths. The number of civilian staff deaths due to malicious acts has risen since the last reporting period, which included 11 such deaths. A consolidated list of staff who have lost their lives as a result of malicious acts, as well as an indication of the status of legal proceedings undertaken by the relevant Member State, is included in my previous report (see A/60/223 and Corr.1, annex II), submitted pursuant to resolution 59/47.

6. The majority of threats to security of United Nations staff and operations continue to be physical attacks, threats and armed robberies. There were 215 violent incidents, 120 incidents of threatening verbal abuse and 93 armed robberies of significant United Nations assets. Five incidents of rape and nine cases of sexual assault occurred. During the reporting period, there was one protracted hostage incident in which seven peacekeepers at the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) were held by non-State actors in Ituri, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result of intense dialogue with the hostage takers, who sought both political and financial concessions, their release was obtained within two weeks. In Haiti, four incidents of financially motivated kidnapping of United Nations national staff occurred, three of whom were released unharmed after negotiations initiated by the victims' families, while one of those kidnapped escaped. A staff member was kidnapped as a result of a labour dispute in Somalia but was released after 30 hours of negotiation by Department of

Safety and Security personnel, assisted by officials of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

7. During the reporting period, 16 incidents of harassment, abuse or physical assault of United Nations personnel occurred at checkpoints or roadblocks, and a further 15 attacks on United Nations humanitarian convoys resulting in death or injury of personnel took place. Moreover, there were 70 incidents of harassment of convoys and 148 incidents in which checkpoints or roadblocks prohibited access to United Nations personnel. The preceding figures do not include incidents occurring in the occupied Palestinian territories, where staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faced continuous obstruction at checkpoints. Aside from incidents involving humanitarian convoys, there were 30 terrorist-related threats, 83 arrests and 117 incursions or attempted incursions into United Nations personnel and field installations. Compared to last year, significant reductions occurred in the number of incidents of violence (from 407 to 215) and of situations of prohibited access at checkpoints (from 220 to 148). Nevertheless, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of attacks on humanitarian convoys resulting in injury or death, up to 15 from 9 in the previous reporting period. Such security incidents undermine the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations, degrade the personal safety and well-being of staff and compromise the security of field installations.

8. The Department has documented first-hand and secondary accounts of critical security incidents involving the staff of international, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive record of such incidents but is indicative of the threats and incidents incurred by such organizations, many of which contribute to United Nations operations, working in tandem or as implementing partners. The Department received first-hand information corroborating the deaths of 16 international and national staff of non-governmental organizations as a result of malicious acts: five in Somalia, three in the Sudan and eight in Afghanistan. In addition, 1 incident of hostage taking, 9 kidnappings, 21 cases of arrest, 6 cases of detention, 40 incidents of sexual assault, 10 armed robberies of significant assets, 18 attacks on non-governmental organization (NGO) convoys resulting in injury or death, 12 incidents of threats to NGO personnel and 23 violent incidents were reported. It is widely assumed that fatalities and security incident figures among national staff of such organizations are much higher than the figures indicate, but NGO efforts are under way to enhance documentation. Unofficial NGO tallies list 24 NGO worker deaths for a two-month period in Afghanistan (April to June 2006). Vehicle hijackings, ambushes, robberies, attacks are considered the primary security and safety threats for the majority of NGO field workers. As in Afghanistan, security threats continue to hinder international, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations' humanitarian operations in Darfur, the Sudan. There, 18 staff of non-governmental organizations were arrested, and 20 violent incidents were directed against NGO personnel. There were 7 incidents of kidnapping, armed robberies of significant NGO assets occurred 39 times and there were 17 cases of harassment of humanitarian convoys.

9. In terms of geographic distribution, the greatest number of violent incidents directed at United Nations personnel have occurred in Africa and Latin America. In Africa, 97 such incidents were recorded, a majority of which took place in three countries: 29 incidents were reported in the Sudan, 24 in Côte d'Ivoire and 9 in Liberia. Latin America accounted for 84 such incidents, including 25 occurring in

Haiti and 15 in Peru. Checkpoints and roadblocks accounted for 14 incidents and armed robbery for 13 incidents in the whole of Latin America. Seventy per cent of all armed robbery of United Nations assets occurred in Africa, with the Sudan accounting for 40 cases and Guinea for 19. The majority of attacks on humanitarian convoys resulting in injury to United Nations personnel also took place in Africa, with the Sudan accounting for 11 of the 15 reported incidents. The Middle East accounted for 52 per cent of checkpoint and road closures that resulted in considerable delay of United Nations activities, 78 of which occurred in Israel. Latin America and Africa each accounted for 22 per cent of checkpoint and road closure delays.

10. As stated in previous reports, many factors contribute to the erosion of staff security. The environments in which United Nations personnel are compelled to operate are often characterized by high rates of crime and unemployment, socio-economic instability and political unrest. Thus, in addition to being targeted due to their affiliation with the Organization, United Nations personnel face the same rising levels of street crime, home invasion and carjacking as the public. The status of United Nations staff members as representatives of the international community in general, as well as of the United Nations in particular, also contributes to the risk of being targeted by a wide range of disaffected groups.

III. Arrest, detention and other restrictions

11. The number of United Nations personnel arrested, under detention or missing, and with respect to whom the United Nations has been unable to exercise its right to protection, has increased from 23 cases last year to 26. 14 United Nations staff members remain in detention in the West Bank, and 10 staff are under arrest in Eritrea. Of the 26 staff members currently detained, 9 have been detained since the previous reporting period: 7 in Israel and 2 in Eritrea. A staff member was reported as unaccounted for in Iraq. A consolidated list of concerned staff members is provided in annex II.

IV. Respect for human rights and the privileges and immunities of United Nations and other personnel

12. The United Nations security management system is based on the fundamental principle that the primary responsibility for the security and protection of staff members, their dependants and property and of the Organization's property rests with the host Government. To that end, paragraph 14 of resolution 60/123 requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to ensure full respect for the human rights, as well as the privileges and immunities of United Nations and other personnel carrying out activities in fulfilment of the mandate of a United Nations operation. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to seek the inclusion in negotiations of headquarters and other mission agreements concerning United Nations and its associated personnel, of the applicable provisions contained in the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of Specialized Agencies, and the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. Paragraph 15 of the same resolution further recommends that the Secretary-General continue to seek the

inclusion of, and that host countries include, key provisions of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, among others, those regarding the prevention of attacks against members of the operation, the establishment of such attacks as crimes punishable by law and the prosecution or extradition of offenders in future as well as, if necessary, in existing status-of-forces, status-of-mission and host country agreements negotiated between the United Nations and those countries, mindful of the importance of the timely conclusion of such agreements.

13. During the previous reporting period, an inventory of all existing host country agreements related to United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, United Nations information centres and other United Nations entities has been made in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs. On that basis, a number of steps have been taken to ensure that the agreements adequately reflect the responsibility of the respective host Governments for the safety and security of United Nations personnel. To that end the Office of Legal Affairs has prepared advice on host country agreements which the Department of Safety and Security has disseminated to all designated officials for security. The Department has further elaborated upon the Office of Legal Affairs' guidance and significantly raised awareness on host country agreements, among resident representatives, humanitarian coordinators and special representatives of the Secretary-General, who all may serve as designated officials for security, in the context of workshops and retreats convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs.

14. The Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Safety and Security has intensified his contacts with Member States, both through their permanent missions to the United Nations and through direct contact with various responsible host country authorities in order to increase cooperation, improve lines of communication and guarantee the necessary support. The Department is actively pursuing a joint strategy with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to promote Member States' acceptance of the Conventions. The General Assembly will be provided with regular reports on the progress of those activities. The Department, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs, will continue to bring specific cases of infringement of the human rights and privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel or other persons undertaking activities in fulfilment of the mandate of a United Nations operation to the attention of the relevant host Government. To further the pursuit of those who organize violence against United Nations and humanitarian personnel, the Department has developed links with Interpol and other international law enforcement bodies to which Member States are parties.

15. The Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka and Yemen continue to withhold essential communication and security equipment and impose restrictions on the movement of goods and means of communication essential to United Nations operations in contravention of the conventions listed above. Despite high-level interventions from the United Nations and indications from the Government of Yemen that essential equipment would be released, at the time of the writing of the report the situation remains unresolved. The Government of Sri Lanka also inhibits the work of the Organization by imposing unnecessary delays and restrictions on the importation of essential

communication and security equipment. The restrictions have a deleterious effect on the beneficiaries of United Nations programmes as well as on staff safety and security.

V. Promoting and enhancing security consciousness

16. Measures taken at Headquarters during the reporting period to enhance awareness of security procedures include the following: continued comprehensive staff training; revised and enhanced strategies for critical incident stress management; and the elaboration and implementation of a communications strategy for the Department of Safety and Security. Training programmes, devised and delivered by designated officials in the field, constitute the primary conduit used by the Department to ensure that United Nations and other personnel contributing to the fulfilment of a United Nations mandate are informed about conditions under which they will operate; in particular, that they are familiarized with the customs and traditions of the host country and made aware of the required standards, including those of domestic and international law. This country-level orientation complements the more general training in human rights and international humanitarian law provided to staff by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

A. Security training programme

17. The Department continues its priority efforts in enhancing security awareness and training for all personnel of the Organization, and specialized training for all security officials and officers. Actions and activities implemented to achieve those objectives for all three target groups are described below.

18. "Basic security in the field", the interactive learning programme on CD-ROM, continues to provide basic security awareness to all United Nations personnel. It is mandatory for all serving and newly recruited personnel, available in all six official languages of the Organization and is accessible through United Nations local area networks, the Department's Internet web page, respective organizations' web pages or by CD-ROM. All agencies, funds, programmes and organizations report wide acceptance, staff satisfaction and high completion rates of the programme. The Department and the Inter-Agency Security Management Network recognized that personnel operating in hazardous field locations require additional security training to operate in high-risk security environments. Hence, in 2004 the development of a CD-ROM on advanced security in the field was initiated and will be launched by the Secretary-General at the next meeting of the Chief Executives Board in October 2006. The programme is aimed at enhancing field security knowledge and skills and will be mandatory for all personnel assigned to areas in security phase I or above, or whose duties routinely require them to travel to those areas. All the above training tools are a result of strong collaborative efforts by the Network and of a significant contribution by the Government of Japan, whose continued support to the Department's security training efforts has been invaluable.

19. In addition to the two learning programmes, in 2006 the booklet entitled "Security in the field", which is produced in the six official languages of the United

Nations and issued to all United Nations staff, will be revised for the first time since 1998 and made available to staff in 2007.

20. The Department continues its support of the United Nations Development Group by presenting security training in the resident coordinator training programme in an effort to better prepare resident coordinators to undertake their duties and responsibilities successfully. To complement the Department's training on security risk assessment, in that context, the Department of Political Affairs intends to provide training on political analysis. The Department of Safety and Security continues to provide training to security management teams in the field, addressing the needs of 170 staff members in nine countries during the present reporting period.

21. With the increased General Assembly authorization for additional security officers, the Department established a new training programme for its officers. All new security officer training programmes include specific instruction on cultural diversity, gender and special security guidelines for female United Nations personnel, including the new inter-agency learning programme on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and authority and integrity awareness on its Internet website, for mandatory completion by all security officers and personnel system wide. Concurrently the Department has embraced the United Nations goals of diversity and has incorporated them into all aspects of training.

22. A three-week induction training programme for Chief Security Adviser took place in January 2006 with 16 newly appointed advisers. The programme addresses a wide range of operational security issues, including the integration of mission security elements of the Department of Safety and Security and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, briefings on agency and departmental mandates, and security coordination. A new element on client security support expectations was conducted with support from the departments in the United Nations Secretariat and from agencies, funds and programmes, all of which have deemed the programme an overall success in preparing the senior security officers to provide enhanced security support in the field.

23. A training needs assessment was conducted in 2005, and the results were used in developing a completely new three-week training programme. It was implemented as the security certification programme and is mandatory for security advisers and field security coordination officers. At the time of submission of the present report, four security certification programmes had been completed, enabling the Department of Safety and Security to deploy 80 trained security advisers/field security coordination officers to assignments in the field. The main objective of the security certification programme is to deploy a security adviser or field security coordination officer with the required knowledge and skills to provide essential security support to the designated official, security management team and United Nations personnel at the assigned duty station. Hence, it is necessary to upgrade the capacity of some 115 serving security advisers and field security coordination officers. This will be accomplished through the newly developed refresher training programme, starting in 2007. The programme will be conducted on a regional basis to minimize cost and is mandatory. The Department's objective is for all of its field security officers to be trained to the new standard by the end of 2007.

24. Since the training of Security and Safety Service staff was formerly conducted independently by the various locations, different standards and quality of training evolved. Therefore, the Department, in consultation with the chiefs of security from

various United Nations units and affiliated institutions, has developed new, comprehensive training methods. The new programme will be completed and implemented by November 2006. In addition, the Department deployed a three-person team of Security and Safety Service training officers to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the newly appointed Chief of Security and Training Officer, and provided a three-week induction training programme.

25. In June 2006 the Department, through the Peacekeeping Operations Support Section and the Training and Development Section, conducted its annual workshop for chief security officers and mission security officers of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A total of 35 officers participated in the workshop, held at the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy in June 2006.

26. Support of United Nations operations in Iraq continued through the deployment of the cadre of trauma and first-aid trained United Nations protection coordination officers, to enhance security support to all United Nations missions outside the international zone. The Department of Security and Safety coordinated a training workshop for 22 protection coordination officers, field security coordination officers and agency security officers of the Iraq security team based in Amman, Jordan. The workshop was conducted by medical personnel of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), and has been incorporated as standard into the new security adviser field security coordination officer security certification programme.

27. The Department provides specific training support to all United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and organizations in the context of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' new staff predeployment training programmes conducted in Brindisi, Italy; the United Nations System Staff College junior programme officer training programme at its office in Turin, Italy; and workshops conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Addis Ababa and Dakar. The Department continues to provide support to the Department of Political Affairs, in particular to its Security Council Affairs Division, in respect of field missions of the Security Council. Prior to such missions, the Department of Safety and Security undertakes a risk assessment on each destination to be visited and on this basis provides appropriate guidance in the form of a briefing book and oral presentation. During Security Council missions, the participants are accompanied by security officers assigned by the Department, who work closely with their counterparts in the field to keep track of developments on the ground.

28. The Department is establishing partnerships with other academic United Nations training centres, aiming at adjusting the level of security training programmes. The United Nations System Staff College at Turin, Italy, with its extensive education programme and client list and its facilities, is an ideal institute for assisting in this endeavour. Discussions are under way to develop a plan to implement an appropriate programme in 2007. Both entities are examining the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of using the Staff College facilities to centralize training of the Department's officers. In addition, the possibility of the Staff College becoming a centre of excellence for designing, preparing and implementing country-specific predeployment security training for United Nations emergency response personnel is being examined.

29. During the previous reporting period the Secretary-General noted the cooperation between the Department and the programme of research conducted by the Center on International Cooperation, New York University, and the Humanitarian Policy Group of the Overseas Development Institute, on humanitarian action in the new security environment: policy and operational implications. The Department is pleased to support this important initiative which identifies some of the key challenges to providing the enabling security environment necessary for the delivery of the United Nations mandate in the field through an analysis of findings from a global data set of major incidents of violence against aid workers from 1997 to 2005. Although the report will be launched during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the authors have provided the Department with an advance summary during the reporting period. The Department finds that the conclusions of the report are well substantiated and corroborate the Department's own analysis and risk management methodology. The conclusions include, inter alia, the following:

- Violent acts against aid workers, as measured in absolute terms, have increased markedly since 1997, with a steeper increase in the second half of the decade.
- Taking into account the growing number of aid workers in the field, however, the global incidence rate of violence in the field has increased only slightly, and has actually fallen in the most violent contexts.
- The number of incidents affecting United Nations and ICRC staff has decreased over the time period, while the number of incidents affecting NGOs and national Red Cross and Red Crescent society workers has increased, in both absolute and relative terms.
- National staff represent the majority of victims, and their risk relative to international staff is increasing in the most violent contexts.
- Most victims are deliberately targeted, either for political or economic purposes rather than randomly exposed to violence, and politically motivated incidents have increased over time.
- Ambushes remain the most common means of attack, but armed incursions on homes and work sites are on the rise.

30. Recognizing the need for expanded collaboration with the international community in a variety of crisis situations, the Department is striving to identify opportunities to exercise and rehearse international response plans with a view to increasing interoperability and collaboration. In that regard, the Department jointly sponsored and chaired the "bright horizons" exercise with Interpol and the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs to enhance knowledge and skills in responding to a mass casualty event. The Department will participate in the TRIPLEX exercise sponsored by the Office, which is scheduled to take place in September 2006, supported by the Government of Finland. In addition, the Department is sending several security advisers/field security coordination officers to the United Nations disaster assistance coordination course to facilitate the work of United Nations disaster assistance and coordination teams deployed to an emergency area. The above-mentioned activities will enhance the capacity to provide security support in multipartner international emergency operations. Lessons learned will be integrated in all Department of Safety and Security chief security adviser/security adviser/field security coordination officer training programmes.

31. Lastly, the Department is developing a plan for additional professional development activities, such as language acquisition and other training to increase the effectiveness of security officers. All Department officers have completed a skill inventory survey, which is maintained in a central database to be used to quickly identify security officers with specific skills needed to support a crisis event.

B. Critical incident stress management

32. The reporting period marked a transitional phase for the Department's Critical Incident Stress Management Unit. The Unit strives to sustain operations while enhancing coordination with the United Nations counselling system. During the period, the bulk of its interventions revolved around the following activities: (a) promoting access to counselling and other psychosocial services, (b) developing a harmonized United Nations approach to critical incident stress, including the predicted influenza pandemic, and (c) upholding inter-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration on critical incident stress management.

33. Over the past year, the Unit has provided services to 11,888 staff in 288 United Nations offices located in 34 countries. This is more than a two-fold increase in the provision of psychosocial services to United Nations staff compared to last year. Further, 3,751 staff members and dependants benefited from individual or group counselling sessions in response to a critical incident or a traumatic event.

34. The Unit developed a strategic framework to enhance the capacities of United Nations staff at the country level by training United Nations staff on stress management and establishing local critical incident stress intervention cells. These teams are comprised of locally based counsellors supported by peer workers, of which 85 were trained during the reporting time. Stress management training was offered to 3,891 staff in 230 separate workshops. The approach proved very effective in Côte d'Ivoire during the January 2006 crisis. Fifty-nine staff members of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), WFP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs received timely psychosocial support from the teams. Department of Safety and Security counsellors were deployed to the Gambia and Senegal to attend to evacuated staff.

35. In Indonesia, Israel and Pakistan, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and recently in India, increased numbers (2,587) of staff benefited from new psychosocial activities at the field level, including staff welfare and predeployment briefings. Those activities play an important role in building resilience and in the prevention of stress-related critical incidents and burnout.

36. In response to the recommendations made by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network in April 2005, the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Critical Incident Stress was created. It is a multidisciplinary group composed of 20 members, nominated by security focal points from a cross-section of United Nations agencies. In September the Working Group endorsed the United Nations standard operating procedures on critical incident stress and the Unit's strategic framework, and developed guidelines for responding to the psychosocial aspects of the predicted influenza pandemic.

37. Thirty-two United Nations counsellors were organized into regional rapid intervention cells, corresponding to the five Department of Safety and Security regions. Owing to that structure, rapid provision of psychosocial support to United

Nations staff and their dependants in response to emergencies was facilitated and proved effective.

38. The Unit improved coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management, including the Medical Services Division, in the following areas: (a) collaboration on the Working Group; and (b) consultation between United Nations medical officers and counsellors on issues pertaining to the crisis in Pakistan. Coordination between the Unit, the Medical Services and the Office of Human Resources Management helped address more efficiently the needs of evacuees. Even with a limited number of counsellors, the Office of Human Resources Management, through the Staff Counsellor's office, and the Critical Incident Stress Management Unit have planned and implemented many joint activities including training, strategic meetings, outreach communication and counselling sessions. In 2006/2007, the Unit is planning to build new partnerships with external networks of counsellors to improve the overall quality of psychosocial services for United Nations staff around the world.

C. Communications strategy

39. The Department's multidimensional strategy for communication has made significant progress. Its website (http://dss.un.org), where over 6,000 staff members have registered, serves as a secure portal for access to a wide variety of security-related information such as travel advisories, the Department of Safety and Security staff directory and a full complement of security training materials, stress management and mission readiness information. Over 7,800 security clearance requests for Colombia and the Philippines, which are pilot countries, have been processed through the Department's integrated security clearance and tracking system in the first six months of the year and hundreds of security incidents have been recorded in the web-based security incident reporting system.

40. The Department initiated and successfully completed its first major component of the public information campaign at Headquarters, the Strengthening Security Project, the objective being to inform delegates, staff members and the media on the implementation of security and access control enhancements. The Project is scheduled for completion during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. During the reporting period, the Department convened numerous meetings of the security information group, which is composed of the following offices and departments of the United Nations Secretariat: the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Safety and Security and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The group continues to meet regularly to exchange views and information on security challenges in specific contexts.

VI. Conformity with operating standards

41. In its resolution 60/123, the Assembly requests the Secretary-General to continue to take the necessary measures to ensure that United Nations and other personnel carrying out activities in fulfilment of the mandate of a United Nations operation are properly informed about and operate in conformity with the minimum operating security standards and relevant codes of conduct and are properly informed about the conditions under which they are called upon to operate and the standards that they are required to meet, including those contained in relevant national and international law, and that adequate training in security, human rights law and international humanitarian law is provided so as to enhance their security and effectiveness in accomplishing their functions, and reaffirms the necessity for all other humanitarian organizations to provide their personnel with similar support.

42. The Department's Policy, Planning and Coordination Unit, which ensures a unified capacity for policy, standards, coordination, communication, compliance and threat and risk assessment, was initiated in January 2006, and recruitment was expected to be complete by August 2006. The Unit works closely with other operational units in the Department as well as with the training and compliance and monitoring units to ensure that new policies and procedures are realistically incorporated into staff training and that means of monitoring exist. For example, processes are being developed to ensure that country minimum operating security standards (MOSS) tables are based on threat and risk assessment and that implementation can be measured objectively against those standards. The Unit has also had meetings with the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section to learn from their experiences in developing a policy framework and using information technology to disseminate policy.

43. The first phase of the strategy, now in progress, is a thorough audit of existing policy, procedures, guidelines and standards related to security throughout the United Nations system. This will facilitate the unification of security policy and procedure, between the different elements of the United Nations security management system (regional operations, the Security and Safety Service, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and agencies, funds and programmes). The strategy will streamline the current body of United Nations security policies and procedures, identify new requirements and provide a security document management system which allows for easy retrieval and continuous revision.

44. At the time of reporting, the Unit has, inter alia, issued a revised version of the 1995 field security handbook, compiled standards for the physical security of the United Nations premises and collated and catalogued existing United Nations security policy and procedure documents. The Unit managed and facilitated the development and publication of policies, procedures and guidelines, including revised security guidelines for women (in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund), and a package of procedures for the management of firearms with the Security and Safety Service. The Unit also worked with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Logistics Support Division on standardizing procurement of security equipment and has drawn up a strategy (approved by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network in May 2006) for the reorganization and rationalization of procedures for the development and management of security policy.

45. The Department's Division of Regional Operations and Field Support estimates that the implementation rate of MOSS is 80 per cent; however, this is a heuristic rather than a mathematically rigorous figure, based mainly on self-assessment by officials in countries. In order to provide a more objective and consistent measure of progress, the Department must have the capacity to be able to mount independent inspections on an adequate scale and a comprehensive set of technical standards to ensure objective inspections and to provide clear guidance to those responsible for implementing MOSS. To that end, the new Compliance, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit is fully staffed and will begin a round of inspections, starting with Indonesia, in July 2006. The Network has made it clear that many United Nations organizations are facing financial difficulties that hinder the full implementation of MOSS and minimum operating residential security standards (MORSS). As a result, at its May 2006 meeting the Network called for a thorough revision of MOSS documentation.

46. During the reporting period the Department continued its efforts to strengthen the analysis of threats to staff safety and security emanating from natural and man-made disasters in order to minimize security risks and to facilitate informed decisions on the maintenance of an effective presence in the field, inter alia, to fulfil their humanitarian mandate. To that end, the Network welcomed the progress made on further developing the security risk management capability of the United Nations system and the establishment of additional capacity for security threat and risk assessments in the Department. The security risk management process endorsed by the Network was effectively propagated and used at all duty stations as a major tool to identify emerging safety and security challenges and to deploy adequate and appropriate mitigating measures to enable the implementation of operational mandates of the departments, agencies, funds and programmes. Taking into consideration that threat and risk assessments are primarily developed by country offices, specific procedures for threat and risk assessments have been developed and incorporated into induction training programmes offered to security managers and personnel at all levels, from designated officials to security advisers and field security coordination officers. The Department was also engaged in the development of global and regional threat assessments addressing specific risks affecting the delivery of humanitarian operations.

VII. Collaboration and cooperation on security measures

A. Inter-Agency Security Management Network

47. The activities and deliberations of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, a subcommittee of the High Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board that ensures coherence, direction and client ownership in the United Nations security management system, are detailed in a separate report to the General Assembly on strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations (A/61/...).

B. Security collaboration between the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations

48. The United Nations system continued to work closely with non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations on security management throughout the reporting period. At the headquarters level, the Department has continued its close working relationship with the NGO consortium, InterAction (the only such consortium with a dedicated Security Coordinator), sharing information and coordinating efforts to ensure staff security, and it also interacts regularly with NGO security directors and managers from other consortiums, as events dictate. The Department's humanitarian security adviser serves as the primary liaison with non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and has made such services known to the NGO consortiums party to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, established by resolution 46/182, annex, paragraph 38. Efforts are under way to further integrate security coordination mechanisms for NGO safety and security, especially within the Sudan and, particularly, in Darfur, but also in Haiti, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Department notes with appreciation the enhanced security consciousness and willingness to cooperate on security matters among non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. It also recognizes the efforts of Member States' donor organizations, such as the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States Agency for International Development Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) that have fostered such enhanced collaboration through the provision of training aids and other resources.

49. The Department worked closely with a task force of the Committee to prepare a report on security collaboration between the United Nations and the NGOs resulting from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator's High-level Humanitarian Forum in Geneva on 31 March 2004. The task force assessed the implementation of a series of recommendations designed to further such collaboration, emanating from the Committee in 2001, and found them to be still relevant but lacking implementation. Consequently, a concerted effort from all parties is required to ensure their efficacy. The recommendations, known as "saving lives together", were endorsed by the Network, and thus the Department is incorporating them into all training programmes. The Department is expending significant energy on ensuring that NGO partners at headquarters levels are in agreement with the updated recommendations, and international NGO consortiums (International Council on Voluntary Agencies, InterAction) are helping the Department to disseminate the "saving lives together" document.

50. The Sudan is a particular forum for active collaboration between the United Nations security management system and international NGOs. During the reporting period, the InterAction alliance of humanitarian NGOs worked together with the Department on an NGO security mechanism for the Sudan to facilitate passage to the United Nations of information on security risks or incidents of mutual concern. Similar initiatives are under way or contemplated by the NGO communities, with the full support of the Department, in other crisis areas, such as Afghanistan, Balochistan province in Pakistan, Banda Aceh in Indonesia, and Iraq and Somalia.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

51. In the past year United Nations and humanitarian personnel have again placed themselves in situations of extreme risk to achieve their mandates. The Department of Safety and Security cooperated with a research programme conducted by the Center on International Cooperation, New York University, and the Humanitarian Policy Group, of the Overseas Development Institute. The programme analysed findings from a global data set of major incidents of violence against aid workers from 1997 to 2005. The preliminary report of the study indicates that by any measure, international aid work is a dangerous profession. A comparison of on-the-job death rates for aid workers against the top 10 most hazardous civilian occupations (United States standard) would place aid workers at number five, after loggers, pilots, fishermen, and structural iron and steel workers.[1]

52. During the reporting period United Nations and humanitarian personnel faced dangerous circumstances resulting in death or injury in Afghanistan, Israel, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan. Staff members in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Darfurs in the Sudan continued to be subjected to the unrelenting hostility of armed groups inimically opposed to their work, and therefore had to live and work under an extremely rigorous security regime. Increased levels of organized violence, intimidation and banditry continued to plague humanitarian activities in the Darfurs. While article 24 of the Darfur Peace Agreement prohibits violence towards civilians and relief workers, that region accounted for 11 out of the 15 attacks on humanitarian convoys resulting in death or injury of personnel. The security climate in Lebanon, where the United Nations has been presented with new and extremely delicate tasks, remains fragile. In other areas where the presence of the United Nations has been established and remains vital, burglaries, robberies, harassment at checkpoints and the threat of being assaulted or taken hostage are prevalent. Recent events of international terrorism, while sparing United Nations facilities, presage a further widening of risks that spares no country or activity. During the humanitarian response to the Pakistan earthquake, a period of seven months, the Department of Safety and Security, with Department of Peacekeeping Operations augmentation, deployed 51 security officers in support of the Pakistan earthquake emergency relief operation. While these security officers were drawn from duty stations around the globe, competing security requirements in the countries to which they were assigned began to emerge, compromising country-level operations in their absence. While the deployment of relief officers from elsewhere effectively met security requirements for the earthquake, competing demands in the country of

[1] The United States Department of Labor in 2004 reported "the individual occupations with high rates of fatal injury were logging workers (92.4 per 100,000 workers), aircraft pilots and flight engineers (92.4 per 100,000), fishers and related fishing workers (86.4 per 100,000), and structural iron and steel workers (47.0 per 100,000) (United States Department of Labor, "Census of fatal occupational injuries summary, 2004", 25 August 2005). To calculate the 2004 fatality rate for aid workers (both violent and accident/illness-related), extrapolations were made from the data on aid workers killed in 2004 (56). Rowley's calculation of 60 per cent violence-related deaths would yield an estimated total of 94 deaths from all causes, which, against the Department's aid worker denominator for that year, gives a rate of 45 per 100,000.

assignment made it evident that the Department did not have the capacity to adequately address multiple emergencies of similar scale.

53. At the meeting of principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, convened on 24 April 2006 in Geneva, the executive directors of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and international non-governmental organizations welcomed the change in culture of United Nations security management, and expressed appreciation for the work of the Department, pointing especially to the more inclusive and collaborative approach focused on enabling programme delivery. Eighteen months after its establishment, the Department has made significant and tangible progress in achieving a professional security management system that can respond with stronger staffing and capacity, based on continuous analysis, to allow the Organization to function safely in the face of a heightened global threat. Thus, I would like to express to the Member States, on behalf of all United Nations staff members, our enormous appreciation for the significant support rendered by the General Assembly through its adoption of resolution 59/276 on 23 December 2004. The Department relies on host Governments, with an increased emphasis on enhancing cooperation and collaboration. Effective provision of services by the Department requires partnership and investment by stakeholders, including the Member States and United Nations clientele, at all levels. On that basis, the Department may achieve its objective of enabling the safe and effective delivery of the United Nations mandated activities in the field.

54. Although the United Nations has taken significant steps to enhance the safety and security of staff, host Governments continue to bear the primary responsibility. While resolution 60/123 reflects the strong commitment of a wide array of Member States to the safety and security of United Nations personnel and activities, I continue to be dismayed by the ongoing difficulties we encounter in a few countries in obtaining permission to import communication equipment. As this remains a serious concern for the health and safety of staff members, I again appeal to all Member States that have imposed such restrictions to lift them immediately. Moreover, I appeal to Member States to work with the Department to fulfil their obligations, under the Charter of the United Nations, to ensure the safety of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

55. I also remain dismayed over the unwillingness of some host Governments to provide timely information in the event of the arrest or detention of locally recruited United Nations personnel, and that very few countries have investigated fully attacks or other threats against international and locally recruited United Nations and associated staff members or held perpetrators accountable under international and national law. The increase in attacks on convoys resulting in death or injury, as well as in rape and sexual assault during the present reporting period is particularly disturbing, and I call upon Member States to undertake all necessary action to bring justice to the victims. Although much can and will be done by the United Nations to train and equip its staff to operate safely in difficult places, the culture of accountability engendered by Member States, local authorities and leaders at all levels remains the surest means of enabling our staff members to apply safely their courage and commitment to those in need.

56. **The reduction in statistics on the number of security incidents involving United Nations staff during the reporting period may be attributable to many factors; however there is no doubt that the enhancements to the United Nations security management system undertaken by the Assembly since 2001 have played a major role. Moreover, it is evident that enhanced risk assessment skills, ongoing security training and improved adherence to MOSS have instilled a greater confidence and capacity to operate safely in areas of higher risk. Thus I strongly recommend that the General Assembly remain seized by this critical issue and continue its robust support of the United Nations security management system.**

Annex I

Civilian personnel who lost their lives as a result of malicious acts during the reporting period (1 July 2005-30 June 2006)

No.	*Name*	*Nationality/organization*	*Place and date of incident*	*Cause*	*Legal action*
1.	Mberia, Dickson Munyua	Kenya/United Nations Office for Project Services	Kenya 15 July 2005	Gunshot wounds	Police investigation ongoing
2.	Guehi, Angel Kossia G Sama	Côte d'Ivoire/International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda	Tanzania 3 October 2005	Precise source of death unknown	Police investigation ongoing
3.	Hleigawi, Yousef Mohammed	Palestine/UNRWA	West Bank 1 October 2005	Gunshot wounds	UNRWA WB working with PA
4.	Mohamoud, Muse Gurage	Ethiopia/Department of Safety and Security	Somalia 3 October 2005	Gunshot wounds	Police investigation ongoing
5.	Hussain Foud Mohamed	Somalia/Polio worker for WHO	Somalia 16 November 2005	Landmine explosion	Investigation complete
6.	Nyakwama, Joab Otieno	FAO/Somalia Water and Land Information Management System	Kenya 1 December 2005	Head injuries	Police investigation file presumably sent to Attorney-General for further directions
7.	Andrianjafy, Emmanuelle	Madagascar/UNDP	Madagascar 13 December 2005	Stab wounds	Suspect under Arrest pending trial
8.	Batali, David	Guard for UNHCR	Sudan 15 March 2006	Gunshot wounds	One suspect arrested
9.	Bahjat, Nabil	Iraq/UNHCR	Sudan 15 March 2006	Gunshot wounds	One suspect arrested
10.	Mabote, Joaquim	Mozambique/UNDP	South Africa 13 April 2006	Gunshot wounds	Police investigation ongoing
11.	Al Jainabi, Wallid Mahmood	Iraq WHO	Iraq 25 April 2006	Gunshot wounds	Police investigation ongoing

No.	Name	Nationality/organization	Place and date of incident	Cause	Legal action
12.	Noorzai, Sarajudin	Afghanistan/UNICEF	Afghanistan 12 May 2006	Rocket-propelled grenade	Police investigation ongoing
13.	Sawalmah, Jaffal Mohmoud	Palestine/WFP	West Bank 30 May 2006	Gunshot wounds	Brought to the attention of authorities
14.	Osman, Mohamed Ged Elseed	UNMIS	Sudan 21 June 2006	Stab wounds	Police investigation ongoing
15.	Matiang, James Thon	Sudan/WHO	Sudan 25 June 2006	Head injuries	Police investigation ongoing

Note: FAO — Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
UNDP — United Nations Development Programme.
UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
UNICEF — United Nations Children's Fund.
UNMIS — United Nations Mission in the Sudan.
UNRWA — United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.
WFP — World Food Programme.
WHO — World Health Organization.

Annex II

Consolidated list of staff members under arrest, detained or missing with respect to whom the United Nations, the specialized agencies and related organizations have been unable to exercise fully their right to protection during the reporting period (1 July 2005-30 June 2006)

No.	*Name*	*Organization*	*Place and date of incident*
1.	Daoud, Nidal	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 25 September 2002
2.	Abu Mu'ala , Ashraf	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 30 November 2003
3.	Rayyan, Marwan	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 1 December 2003
4.	Teklemariam, Mengistu	UNICEF	Arrested in Eritrea on 6 May 2004
5.	Abu Leil, Ibrahim Ayyoub Mohammad	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 16 May 2004
6.	Al Qassas, Ibrahim Mohammad	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 16 May 2004
7.	Atallah, Nahed	UNRWA	Arrested in Gaza by the Israeli authorities on 14 August 2004
8.	Fissehaie, Bement	UNICEF	Arrested in Eritrea on 14 February 2005
9.	Al-Azzeh, Dirar	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 28 June 2005
10.	Fayyad, Ibrahim	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 31 July 2005
11.	Awawdeh, Musa	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 25 September 2005
12.	Saleem, Kamal	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 30 November 2005
13.	Assi, Arafat Yousef Sobhi	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 8 December 2005
14.	Sleit, Majdi Adnan	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 23 January 2006
15.	Khaled, Rida Mohamoud	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 29 January 2006
16.	Al Mabrouk, Mahdi Amin Mousa	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 15 February 2006
17.	Mekonen, Fshazion	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 30 March 2006
18.	Biniam Asgedom Nugussie	UNHCR	Arrested in Eritrea on 6 May 2006
19.	Al Hasany, Haider Munthar Hashim	WHO	Missing in Iraq since 8 May 2006
20.	Hammad, Ala' Mohd.	UNRWA	Arrested in West Bank by the Israeli authorities on 14 June 2006
21.	Yosief, Tesfay	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 24 July 2006
22.	Tewldeberhan, Kiflai	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 24 July 2006
23.	Mesfun, Fecadu	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 24 July 2006
24.	Gibremeskel, Mengestab	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 24 July 2006

No.	Name	Organization	Circumstances of disappearance
25.	Debesai, Aster	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea on 22 August 2006
26.	Tsegay, Fessaha	UNMEE	Arrested in Eritrea, date unknown

Note: UNHCR — United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
UNICEF — United Nations Children's Fund.
UNMEE — United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
UNRWA — United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.
WHO — World Health Organization.

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Agenda item 67 (b)
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Effects of economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights

Note by the Secretary-General*

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the independent expert on the effects of economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights, Bernards A. N. Mudho, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council decision 1/102.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline provided for in the relevant General Assembly resolutions owing to the need to reflect the latest information available.

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Report of the independent expert on the effects of economic reforms policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights

Summary

The independent expert on the effects of economic reform policies and foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights submits the present report in order to provide the General Assembly with a short update on recent developments concerning the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), the current state of debate concerning the concept and implementation modalities of this new initiative, and its impact on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and human rights. The Multilateral debt relief initiative (MDRI), proposed by the Group of Eight (G-8) in Summer 2005, foresees a 100 per cent debt relief by the International Monetary Fund, the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank and the African Development Fund (AfDF) of the African Development Bank for the world's most indebted poor countries, in order to help them to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The package has an overall volume of US$ 50 billion and envisions providing eligible countries with annual average savings on debt service of about US$ 1.25 billion over a period of 40 years.

However, the MDR initiative is not likely to resolve all foreign debt problems of poor countries once and for all. First, only countries that have successfully completed the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative are eligible (19 countries so far). Secondly, only three multilateral development banks participate in the debt relief initiative, leaving in particular Latin American and Asian countries with significant debt stocks. Although the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative is highly welcomed as it provides poor countries with some much needed financial and policy space (that has now to be carefully and responsibly managed by beneficiaries), it should be kept in mind that low income countries' overall debt stock is estimated at about ten times MDRI's volume (US$ 500 billion) and that the concrete impact of MDRI on the achievement of MDG and associated human rights aspects will therefore be long-term and difficult to measure.

Consequently, the independent expert recommends the development of follow-up initiatives to MDRI, including further debt relief programmes by other multilateral institutions currently not participating and initiatives towards a permanent solution to the problems of bilateral and commercial debts. He also recommends to include further steps towards a more favorable trade system. In this context the independent expert recalls in particular the eighth MDG to "develop a global partnership for development", which explicitly calls for "an open trading and financial system that is rule-based" and a comprehensive solution to developing countries' debt problems.

With respect to MDRI , the independent expert invites participating multilateral institutions to consider some improvement in the eligibility and implementation criteria. His suggestions relate in particular to (a) a more adequate weighing of MDG criteria in the formula for the reallocation of MDRI related additional funds, (b) the inclusion of non-HIPC countries into IDA and AfDF parts of the debt relief initiative, and (c) a revision of IDA's cut-off-date for eligible debt.

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I. Introduction

1. In compliance with resolution 2005/19 of the Commission on Human Rights the Independent Expert has reported to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. As requested by the Commission, the report submitted to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly paid particular attention to (a) the effects of the foreign debt and the policies adopted to face them on the full enjoyment of all human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights in developing countries; (b) measures taken by Governments, the private sector and international financial institutions to alleviate such effects in developing countries, especially the poorest and heavily indebted countries; and (c) new developments, actions and initiatives being taken by the international financial institutions, other United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with respect to structural adjustment policies and human rights (A/60/384).

2. In his first report to the General Assembly the independent expert highlighted in particular the current situation of foreign debt and its impact on the enjoyment of human rights from a historical perspective, and reviewed new initiatives for debt relief, in particular the Group of Eight (G-8) proposal and their implications.

3. At the time the first report was submitted to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, many implementation details of the new G-8 debt relief proposal were still under discussion within the decision-making bodies of the three multilateral institutions directly concerned and it was thus premature to comment on the potential impact of MDRI on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and on the full enjoyment of all human rights. The independent expert is therefore grateful for the opportunity to provide the members of the General Assembly, as a follow-up to his last report, with a short update on recent developments concerning MDRI, and a summary of the current debate concerning the concept and implementation modalities of this new initiative, and its impact on the achievement of MDGs and the full enjoyment of all human rights.

II. History and key features of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative

4. First debt relief initiatives date back as early as the 1970s when "Paris Club" bilateral creditors started writing off debts for some developing countries. Relief continued during the 1980s and 1990s when bilateral debt stocks where subsequently cut by 33 per cent under the Toronto terms for low income countries in 1988; 50 per cent under the London terms of 1991; 67 per cent under Naples terms of December 1994; and finally by 90 per cent under the Cologne terms of November 1999. However, during the 1990s it became increasingly clear that bilateral Paris Club debt reductions did not succeed in resolving poor country's debt sustainability problems as many of them still exceeded the defined debt sustainability thresholds.[2]

5. In 1996 the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the Heavily Indebted Poor Country" (HIPC) Initiative in order to reduce developing country's debt stock further. HIPC Initiative entailed coordinated action by multilateral organizations and governments to reduce to sustainable levels the external debt burdens of the most heavily indebted poor countries. Under HIPC Initiative, eligible countries receive interim debt relief as soon as they meet certain policy

performance criteria ("Decision point"). Later on, irrevocable debt relief is granted if policy performance has stayed on track ("Completion point"). As of end August 2006, 40 countries are eligible for HIPC initiative, of which 19 have already reached the "Completion point": Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. In addition, 10 more countries have reached the decision point: Burundi, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Sao Tome and Principe and Sierra Leone. Eleven countries could still reach decision point before the end of 2006: Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Somalia, the Sudan and Togo.[3]

6. In the context of ongoing debates on the MDGs, G-8 countries, as main shareholders of the multilateral development banks, proposed in summer 2005 that IMF, the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank and the African Development Fund (AfDF) of the African Development Bank fully cancel their debt claims on the world's most indebted poor countries. The proposal that led to the so-called MDRI was endorsed in July 2005 by G-8 summit held at Gleneagles, Scotland. The initiative was explicitly designed to provide HIPC countries with additional support to achieve MDGs.[4]

7. Under MDRI, HIPCs are eligible for full and irrevocable debt relief as soon as they have reached – or will reach – HIPC completion point. Debt cancellation under MDRI will come in addition to debt relief already committed under HIPC Initiative, but unlike HIPC Initiative, MDRI does not propose any parallel relief on bilateral or private debt, or on debt to multilateral institutions beyond IMF, IDA, and AfDF.

8. Although MDRI is an initiative common to three international financial institutions, the decision to grant debt relief is ultimately the separate responsibility of each institution and in fact the implementation provisions adopted by the respective governing entities differ in several points.

9. Initially, the 19 countries that have reached decision point under HIPC Initiative are expected to receive full cancellation of their eligible debt. The remaining 10 interim and 11 pre-decision point HIPCs would become eligible once they have completed the requirements for HIPC Initiative. Tajikistan and Cambodia as non-HIPC countries will benefit from IMF debt relief, as their per-capita income is below US$ 380, but not from cancellation of IDA debts.

10. IMF started implementing MDRI in January 2006 while IDA began providing relief on 1 July 2006. For AfDF, MDRI became effective on 1 September 2006.[5]

11. While IMF is supposed to use its own resources to cover the debt relief, IDA and AfDF will be compensated. In March 2006, donors agreed "to a financing package that calls for additional donor contributions over time to compensate IDA [and AdDF] "'dollar-for-dollar' for the debt relief provided. Donors have committed to ensuring that IDA's financial capacity is preserved so that

additional resources will be available to support the development efforts of poor countries."[6] The objective of this operation is to preserve the long-term financial capacity of IDA and the AfDF.

III. Recent discussion on the impact of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative

12. The full benefit of MDRI from all three institutions, i.e. the total amount of debt cancelled, will be over US$ 50 billion: about US$ 37 billion for IDA, US$ 8.5 billion for AfDF and US$5 billion for IMF. About US$ 36 billion of this amount is expected to have been cancelled in 2006. Without MDRI, the global amount of US$ 50 billion would have been paid back over a period of about 40 years, which means that the annual saving on debt service by participating countries can be estimated at about US$ 1.25 billion in average over this period. Instead of being reimbursed to the three participating multilateral institutions, these funds can now be spent by beneficiary countries, on needs linked to the achievement of MDGs and associated human rights aspects.[7]

13. However, a closer look on the concept and implementation modalities of MDRI reveals several problematic aspects concerning its overall impact. It has already been mentioned that only a limited number of countries will directly benefit from MDRI, leaving other indebted low and middle income countries without additional relief. In this context, the independent expert welcomes IMF approach to apply strict uniformity of country treatment. This principle has allowed the inclusion of two non-HIPC countries with a per capita income level of less than US$ 380 in IMF part of MDRI. It is recommended that IDA, for reasons of equity, should consider a similar approach. This approach could result in taking on board all IDA-only countries, including those with indebtedness ratios below HIPC thresholds.[8]

14. MDRI does not introduce new conditionality to beneficiary countries, but as the completion of HIPC programme is a precondition to qualify for MDRI, the eligibility is in fact subordinated to HIPC conditionality, including structural reforms and criteria that are difficult to meet for a number of countries in the given timeframe. Within MDRI, for the 19 HIPCs that have already reached completion point, retroactive assessments have been conducted in order to determine whether there had been any deterioration in policy performance. According to IMF and World Bank information, Mauritania initially did not meet the eligibility requirements, but has since taken steps to improve its public finance management. Mauritania's participation was reconfirmed by IDA Board of Directors on 27 June 2006. For newly qualifying completion-point HIPCs (Cameroon was the first in May 2006), qualification for MDRI is automatic.[9] Once granted, MDRI debt cancellation becomes irrevocable for a given country and will not be subject to any ongoing performance monitoring by the multilateral banks. The budgeting and utilization of resources released will be the autonomous decision of the beneficiary countries which opens in fact an important economic policy space, allowing for progress towards the achievement of MDGs and the realization of human rights.[10]

15. For the envisaged benefits to be realized, the new policy space will need to be carefully and responsibly managed. Firstly, beneficiary countries should be particularly prudent concerning the future accumulation of debt. If the policy space were used for borrowing from non-concessional sources, debt levels could soon become unsustainable again. Secondly, beneficiary countries should

direct freed MDRI resources specifically towards the achievement of MDGs. In the same context it should be underlined that good governance, accountability and transparency are crucial elements to release the benefits created by this debt release. Civil society and its organizations should play an important role of monitoring the budgeting and spending of these additional resources.[11]

16. Since IMF has begun its implementation of MDRI in January 2006, there is already some evidence that beneficiary countries have started budgeting and directing the released resources towards poverty reduction. Government plans in this sense have been reported from Zambia, Tanzania and Ghana.[12]

17. While there is no additional conditionality on the debt relief operation as such, the implementation mechanism will favour countries with a good IMF / World Bank policy performance record. As described earlier, IDA and AfDF will deduce debt relief from the individual country allocations and redistribute these funds on the basis of policy performance criteria. Given that the central objective of MDRI is to achieve MDGs, the related indicators should be weighted in an adequate way, together with country performance indicators, in the formula for allocating these additional resources.[13]

18. The limitation of MDRI to only three multilateral development banks is likely to lead to considerable inequality in its impact on the debt stock of individual eligible countries. The degree to which the initiative will lead to a reduction of overall debt burden and consequently free resources for policy areas linked to the achievement of MDGs depends on the individual country's debt structure and its geographic location. In fact, no country has benefited from 100 per cent relief for all its debt through MDRI. For many African countries the three participating development banks are the main creditors and it is estimated that MDRI will wipe out 75-80 per cent of the total debt of countries like Uganda or Tanzania. Other countries will have a much lower portion of their debts cancelled, either because their debt portfolio includes more bilateral and commercial debts, or because their regional development banks are not involved in the initiative.[14] The latter is particularly the case for the Latin American countries that would qualify for MDRI, but also for countries with debt stocks with the Caribbean or the Asian Development Bank. Ongoing discussions amongst donors whether other selected multilateral development banks will join the initiative have to be closely followed.

19. Benefits for participating countries have been reduced from initially envisaged levels through the definition of "cut-off dates", i.e. the date up to which debt is cancelled. IMF and AfDF decided to cancel all debts disbursed before 2004, while IDA chose the end of 2003 as cutoff date. The choice of an earlier date has in fact resulted in a global diminution of relief of about US$ 5 billion.[15]

20. The impact of MDRI on the net resources flow to participating and non-participating developing countries is another important aspect to be analyzed. In fact, the implementation models chosen by IDA and AfDF will spread the initiatives benefits over a larger number of countries. In the case of IDA, the annual savings each beneficiary country realizes on debt service will be deducted from its respective annual IDA allocation. This feature has been introduced in order to help allay moral hazard and equity concerns generally associated with debt cancellation. In a second step, the amount IDA has saved by this deduction will be allocated to a bigger group of 67 countries according to IDA's

performance-based allocation (PBA) system. This feature is designed to maintain the link between IDA resource transfers and country performance. Consequently, fresh IDA allocations to countries receiving debt relief would be composed of their "gross" yearly allocations, minus their debt service forgone as a consequence of MDRI in the same year, plus their PBA-defined share of the global amount deduced from all countries during the first step.[16] AfDF is using a similar system, spreading funding for debt cancellation of (initially) 15 countries among a larger group of 40.[17]

21. As future "gross" allocations to countries are subject to several uncertainties (such as the amount of fresh resources made available to the multilateral banks in the future), the overall effect of the system on individual countries is difficult to predict. It is however not excluded that a number of HIPCs could face declines in their fresh allocations, if the deductions cannot fully be compensated by the "second step allocation", due to low country performances in the PBA system. In its own analysis, IDA does not exclude that in some cases fresh allocations could be below the pre-MDRI level. However, if foregone debt service is taken into account, no country will be worse off resources-wise than it was before MDRI.

22. The dependence of fresh allocation levels from PBA under MDRI makes country performance evaluation criteria a key element determining the impact of debt relief. The independent expert suggests that further analysis of these criteria be conducted with a view to improving its incentive mechanism regarding the promotion of human rights.

IV. Impact on the global achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

23. MDRI is welcomed as a first important step liberating funds urgently needed to progress toward the achievement of MDGs, which, in turn, with some additional measures could positively impact on the realization of human rights. It should however not be forgotten that the debt problem has not be resolved once and forever, as initially announced, and that poor countries continue to face important debt burden. In total, low-income country debt is currently estimated at around US$ 500 billion,[18] about ten times the amount cancelled by MDRI. There is a need for further comprehensive solutions to the debt problems of poor countries, including further debt relief by other multilateral institutions and for permanent solutions to the problems of bilateral and commercial debts.

24. While positive effects of MDRI will certainly be felt in some countries and sectors, many observers estimate that the overall impact of the initiative will be rather limited, compared to overall needs related to the achievement of MDGs. In fact, the gain of resources for participating countries is relatively small, due to very soft lending conditions offered by the involved multilateral banks. IDA loans, for instance, have to be reimbursed over 40 years, at 0.75 per cent interest rate, with a 10 year grace period. As a consequence, before MDRI, the 15 African HIPCs have paid on average US$ 19 million in debt service per year to IDA while receiving at the same time in average US$ 197 million in new IDA credits. The concrete impact of MDRI in this context will be long-term and difficult to measure.[19] Past experience with HIPC Initiative has shown that the country's poverty reduction expenditures have increased following the debt cancellation,[20] but were still below what was needed to make significant progress towards achievement of the millennium development goals.

25. Another critical point is the question of additionality of resources. In order to have a positive impact, debt relief operations have to be granted in addition to existing aid and must not be offset by a reduction in traditional bilateral or multilateral aid programmes. There is some doubt as to whether this principle has always been respected in the past. As the statistics of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveal, countries that benefited from HIPC Initiative have suffered from a sharp decline in traditional aid (i.e. development assistance less debt forgiveness) with the launch of HIPC Initiative at the end of the 1990s, a trend that continued until 2001. It was only in 2003 that Pre-HIPC Initiative levels have been reached again.[21]

V. Conclusions and recommendations

26. The independent expert welcomes the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) for the full cancellation of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt claims to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Development Association (IDA) and the African Development Fund (AfDF). An estimated annual amount of US$ 1.25 billion will be released by the initiative and can be spent by beneficiary countries without additional conditions. Beneficiary countries have the corresponding responsibility to ensure the enabling environment by carefully managing the additional policy space, so that the resources provided translate into real progress toward the realization of human rights, via the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Good governance, accountability and transparency have to be considered crucial to release the benefits created by this debt release.

27. In the same context, the important role of non-state actors has to be emphasized. The independent expert invites civil society and its organizations to play an active role in monitoring the budgeting and spending of additional MDRI resources, in order to ensure their utilization in coherence with the full enjoyment of human rights and the achievement of MDGs.

28. With regards to the very important remaining debt stock of poor countries, more has to be done if debt relief is to have a tangible impact on the achievement of MDGs and associated human rights. There is a need for comprehensive follow-up initiatives in order to tackle the debt problems of poor countries, including further debt relief by other multilateral institutions currently not participating in MDRI, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. There is also a need for progress towards a permanent solution to the problems of bilateral and commercial debts.

29. Resources provided to poor countries in the context of debt relief initiatives should not be granted at the expense of ongoing traditional development aid, if debt relief is to produce an overall benefit. The independent expert invites the donor community to ensure the additionality of resources in order to avoid that the impact of positive debt relief on the achievement of MDGs is offset by fewer MDG support to other sectors or other countries.

30. The independent expert welcomes the strict equity of treatment applied by IMF, allowing two non-HIPC countries to benefit from MDRI on grounds of their low per capita income levels. He invites IDA and AfDF to consider adopting similar approaches.

31. The independent expert regrets that IDA has fixed the end of calendar year 2003 as "cut-off date" for eligible debt to be cancelled. This shift from the initial G-8 proposal will result in significant loss of debt relief. He invites IDA to reconsider this decision.

32. Facilitating the achievement of MDGs has been the key objective of MDRI. This fact should be adequately reflected in the formula used by IDA and AfDF to reallocate MDRI- country's savings on debt service.

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[1] http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/#

[2] Moss, Todd: "Will debt Relief make a Difference ?"; Center for Global Development, Mai 2006, p.6

[3] See: The Word Bank, web site on debt relief: http://web.worldbank.org; Home > News > Issue Briefs > Debt Relief

[4] G8 Finance Ministers' Conclusions on Development, London, 10-11 June 2005

[5] African Development Bank web site, press release of September 5, 2006

[6] The World Bank, Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative Fact Sheet, July 2006.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/Resources/mdri_eng.pdf

[7] idem

[8] International Monetary Fund, Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative Fact Sheet, August 2006, http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/mdri.htm

[9] The Word Bank, Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative Fact Sheet

[10] The World Bank, Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative Fact Sheet, July 2006.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/Resources/mdri_eng.pdf

[11] Some examples are quoted in : "G 8 Debt Deal one year on: What happened and what next ?"; EURODAD Report, June 2006, p. 10.

[12] Jubilee Debt Campaign, The Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative: The good, the bad and the ugly; June 2006; p. 3

[13] A similar proposal has been made by the Commonwealth HIPC Ministerial Forum, Livingston, Zambia, 10-12 April 2006

[14] EURODAD, p.6

[15] Jubilee Debt Campaign, p. 3

[16] IDA Resource Mobilization Department, FRM, "IDA'S Implementation of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative", March 2006

[17] Jubilee Debt Campaign, p. 2

[18] The World Bank, Online Database External Debt.

[19] Moss, Todd, p. 11

[20] idem, p. 10

[21] UN, Recent developments in external debt, Report of the Secretary General (A/61/152) 14 July 2006